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Lucia A Keegan 07/21/2006 03:17:03 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT -
Israeli-Lebanese Conflict: Iran and the Lebanese Conflict
Diplomatic Solutions and the UN
Hezbollah Resistance
PARIS - Friday, July 21, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran and the Lebanese Conflict
Diplomatic Solutions and the UN
Hezbollah Resistance

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

While the Israeli - Lebanese conflict in general continues to dominate headlines and commentaries, three themes stand out. Right-of-center Le Figaro insists that Israel has been taken by surprise by the resistance of Hezbollah fighters and has resolved itself to a "long war" in Lebanon. The role of Iran, and less prominently Syria, maneuvering behind the scenes as well as the silence of the Arab world is analyzed in left-of-center Le Monde. Finally, negotiations at the UN to find a diplomatic solution to the

conflict are widely seen as hindered by America's "unconditional" support for Israel (Le Monde).

Right-of-center Le Figaro's headline says that "Israel has been taken by surprise by Hezbollah's resistance." An inside article notes that "Israel is preparing for a long war" and that "seen from Beirut, Israel's strategy to do away with or at least weaken Hezbollah appears to be particularly risky." (See Part C)

In his weekly column in right-of-center Le Figaro, Ivan Rioufol calls the Israeli-Lebanese conflict Act IV in the World War of radical Islam against the West. Rioufol says that the image that Chirac gave of France in 2003, as "systematically anti-American and pro-Arab" has been detrimental to France's credibility in the Middle East. (See Part C)

Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt are denouncing Hezbollah "but the criticism is actually targeted at their Shiite rivals in Iran" according to right-of-center Le Figaro. "The leaders of these Sunni countries are irate at Hezbollah's anti-Israeli 'coup de force' that puts them in an awkward position with regard to their ally the U.S. as well as their own public opinion."

"While the crisis in Lebanon continues," reports right-of-center Le Figaro "Teheran is adding fuel to the fire... and giving the impression that the Iranian regime thinks itself to be invulnerable." The editorial by Pierre Rousselin notes that: "Even if the operational link between Teheran, Hezbollah and Hamas can be called into question, there is no doubt as to the ideological affiliations as well as to the financial and military support." Rousselin wonders if the "war against Hezbollah will halt the rise in power of Iran. While the hope exists, each passing day increases the risk that the Islamic Republic will continue to push its pawns forward in the Arab world." (See Part C)

Olivier Roy, Middle East expert at French national research center CNRS, pens an op-ed in left-of-center Le Monde: "Iran: Raising the Stakes." Roy says that the conflicts in the Middle East have a common denominator: Iran. "It is the only player in the region that has a coherent strategy where short term actions jibe with long term goals... More than ever a political solution is necessary to end turmoil in the Middle East. This political solution may not necessarily depend on diplomacy but on an adaptation of military means towards a political end."

Left-of-center Le Monde reports that a "diplomatic solution" to the conflict in Lebanon is "hindered by America's support for Israel." Right-of-center Le Figaro quotes Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora who laments that there can be no diplomatic solution to the conflict so long as the U.S. "allows" Israel to continue the offensive. (See Part C)

Left-of-center Liberation says that the "UN is shilly-shallying... and though it was 'battle stations' at the UN yesterday, there is no cease fire in view... The Israelis, supported by the Americans do not want a cease fire that could lead to a status quo ante and give Hezbollah free rein to attack northern Israel... In this context France has tried to push forward a draft resolution calling for a 'humanitarian truce' but without great success because of American opposition." (See Part C)

In Catholic La Croix a poll shows wide support on the part of the French public (70 percent) for sending UN peacekeeping troops to Lebanon. Only 53 percent however believe that France should have a prominent role in these troops. 58 percent of respondents believe both Hezbollah and Israel are responsible for the conflict. The strong support for sending UN troops follows logically, the accompanying article says, from the French perception of dual responsibility. The weaker support for French participation marks "fear that France would be touched by terrorism if it intervenes."

On foreign jihadists in Iraq, popular right-of-center daily Le Parisien reports on hearings of a French national accused of participating in recruitment operations for al Qaeda in Iraq. Amine Liassine is among the rising tide of French nationals of Algerian descent with such terror connections. The daily says that terrorist cells are using increasingly putting students' "scientific knowledge to use for jihad."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran and the Lebanese Conflict

"Shiite Iran" The Dread of the Arab World"

The editorial by Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/21): "Lebanon is crumbling under Israeli bombs, Palestine has sinking into chaos, civil war is spreading in Iraq and the Taliban are back in Afghanistan. While the region falls apart, the Arab world remains silent, paralyzed, as if it were teetering on the edge of a cataclysm... The feeling of powerlessness is heightened by the fact that no Arab country has any influence over Iran whose objective is to bring an end to Sunni supremacy in the region. After getting a foothold in Iraq thanks to the American intervention that put the Shiites in power, the regime of the Mullahs has everything to gain from the war that Israel is waging on two fronts... Without a thought to the consequences in terms of losses among the civilian population, after all no Iranian will be killed there, the Islamic Republic appears to be the only state capable of pitting itself against Israel in the minds of Arab public opinion... Syria for its part has been rejected by both the U.S. and France and has chosen to enter into an alliance against nature with Iran."

Ivan Rioufol in his weekly column in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/21): "The only good thing to come out of the Israeli Lebanese conflict so far is that it has forced pacifist Europe to open its eyes and stop hinting that Israel is responsible for disorder in the world... France would be wise to worry more about the rise in Islamic extremism... Israel is not at war with Lebanon, contrary to what the French government says... It is at war with Hezbollah... and Syria and Iran that are using Lebanon like a disarmed puppet. What is France waiting for to state these facts?... But the continued tension in the Middle East is especially favorable to Jacques Chirac and Dominique de Villepin who were never so popular as when they headed the opposition to the American intervention in Iraq."

Diplomatic Solutions and the UN

"A Diplomatic Solution Hindered"

Nathalie Nougayrede in left-of-center Le Monde (07/21): "The signals sent out by American officials tend to confirm that Washington is prepared to give the Israeli army the time it needs to carry out its military objectives against Hezbollah. This puts France in a difficult position since at the G8 Jacques Chirac took care to reaffirm France's common course with the U.S....and the commitment to promote the implementation of Resolution 1559... But it is precisely the ambiguities within the text of this Resolution that pose problems." STAPLETON